

# URGE

## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University of Alabama and Department of Geological Sciences

This is what was found by University of Alabama Geological Sciences URGE Pod on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

### **EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement**

- [University of Alabama Policies and Laws, Equal Opportunity Policies and Equal Opportunity Law](#)
- [EEO on UA faculty jobs website](#)
- [EEO on UA staff jobs website](#)
- [EEO on UA student jobs website](#)

### **Where advertisements are posted, sent, and where recruitment occurs**

- [University of Alabama jobs posted on this website](#)
- [University of Alabama Undergraduate virtual recruitment](#)
- [University of Alabama Department of Geological Sciences Faculty and grad student positions](#)
- HireED posting site
- University of Alabama Department of Geological Sciences graduate school recruitment:
  - DGS recruits at conferences booths
  - DGS recruits at NAGB conferences

### **Applicant requirements:**

#### **University of Alabama Graduate School Requirements:**

- GPA: undergraduate GPA of 3.0 overall, 3.0 for the last 60 semester hours in a degree program, or 3.0 for a completed graduate degree program
- If required by department, an applicant must have a 300 on the GRE, a score at the 50th percentile on the MAT, a 500 on the GMAT, or a score at the 50th percentile on the MCAT, or a score at the 50th percentile on the Executive Assessment (EA; EMBA only)
- An online application form
- Application fee payment: \$65 for U.S. citizens and permanent residents, \$80 for international students
- Statement of purpose



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- Unofficial admission scores (GRE, GMAT, MAT or MCAT; if required by the department)
- Unofficial transcripts
- At least three letters of recommendation
- Language scores (non-native English speakers). Due to COVID-19, Duolingo English test score may be accepted by departmental basis

### **University of Alabama Department of Geological Sciences Graduate student acceptance requirements**

Unpublished Admit Targets:

- GPA: one of the following must be above 3.0: Overall GPA, Major GPA, or last 60 credit hours (we can admit with less than 3.0. but it is conditional and the students will be expected to get good grades or will be removed).
- No GRE requirement
- Applicants must have passed 4 of the following 6 classes: Cal 1 and 2, Chem 1 and 2, Physics 1 and 2 (this may change soon).
- Non-native speakers do have fixed test thresholds for language ability, but these do not apply to UA citizens or green card holders
- GCF increasingly expects formal research experiences.

### **University of Alabama Undergraduate Admissions Requirements**

- Application fee payment: \$40
- College prep curriculum:
  - 4 units of English
  - 4 units of social sciences, including world history or a comparable course (second foreign language will satisfy one of the four required social science requirements)
  - 3 units of mathematics (must include algebra I, algebra II, and one unit of either geometry, trigonometry, or calculus)
  - 3 units of natural sciences, including two courses with lab components
  - 1 unit of foreign language (we will accept courses that reflect an enhanced understanding of global and cultural perspectives)
  - 5 additional units of academic courses (We recommend courses in fine arts or computer literacy, with additional courses in mathematics, natural sciences, and foreign language.)
- Standardized test scores are optional due to COVID-19



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### University of Alabama Faculty/job requirements (unpublished)

- Every faculty member must be hired from committee, every committee has to have one member of a minority group (based on the legal description of minority group)
  - This can be problematic because there are no African American faculty in any STEM department, except math so they usually have to bring someone from another department
  - Places larger time burden on minoritized faculty members
- Advertisement must be sent to some minority professional group (according to discipline) ie. gender in Geoscience vs. Biology
- On applications, applicants are not legally allowed to self-identify as a minority
- Often interview at AGU or GSA to get face to face time
- Application includes a diversity statement
  - Focused question in our department: how would you mentor minoritized student?
- Following the precedent set by the University of California system regarding the legality of advertising specifically for Minority applicants within the new postdoc-tenure track program, the UA does not permit advertising faculty positions as looking for minority applicants, nor can we boost or eliminate applicants based on their minority identity.

### There is no public rubric for hiring.

Having a public rubric may be beneficial to reducing bias in the hiring process.

### Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?

- Hiring committees based on expertise, every single faculty hire requires the formation of a new ad-hoc committee
  - Rules to assemble hiring committee are not public
- For graduate admissions, there is no formal admissions committee and students' acceptances are decided by the potential faculty advisor advocating for a space in their group.
  - A new admissions committee may be being formed in the near future, there is much to consider from this deliverable to provide a strong foundation to make graduate admissions more equitable



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Has your university or company implemented or considered strategies like cohort hiring, mentoring, dual career support and partner hires, re-visioning your work culture, or other considerations outlined in “Leveraging Promising Practices”<sup>6</sup>?

- Cannot have a public statement on partner hiring because it is nepotism
  - “Will facilitate helping find opportunities for partner”

### **URGE Recommendations to DGS:**

#### **Short Term action items: update website**

- Update the DGS faculty and graduate student hiring webpage more regularly
  - Updated annually to indicate which PI’s are currently accepting students
- On the DGS website, ADVERTISE the fact that GRE is not required
- On the DGS website, advertise University programs such as [Tide Together Graduate Mentor Program](#), and other programs that would make it clear that students could consider this a more welcoming environment
- The website should have information for prospective graduate students on how to navigate the department’s application practices. This is especially critical for first-gen students who do not have the privilege of working knowledge of best practices.
  - Link to [geogradapp.com](http://geogradapp.com) on our website and any other **specific** tips to applying to UA DGS i.e.: do we expect students to contact potential advisors ahead of time?
  - How do we weigh different aspects of the application? Ex: are grades in major courses more important to admission to our department than overall GPA?
  - Rubrics for determining admission status should be made available, and the criteria used to accept applicants
- We need to have a visible statement on diversity (see deliverable 3) that uses a department mission statement to openly recruit students from underrepresented groups

#### **Short term: update recruitment**

- Waived graduate application fees would reduce a huge barrier to students wishing to apply.
- Strengthen outreach and recruitment early in the admissions cycle to build diversity of applicant pool
  - Ex: developing relationships with sister departments in institutions whose undergraduate alumni of color frequently go on to earn doctoral degrees

# URGEO

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- Connect more strongly with undergraduate researchers
- Increase transparency and honesty about the feedback loop that keeps departments lacking diversity
- Calls for recruitment should go on social media, both for grad and faculty positions
  - Encourage more activity for recruitment on Twitter [@uageosci](#)
  - Contact minority networks for further reach. From a pod member's experience, we could consolidate all of our asks and put them in our quarterly newsletter.
    - NAGB
    - [Geolatinas](#)
    - Black in Geosciences: [blackingeosciences@gmail.com](mailto:blackingeosciences@gmail.com)
    - Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Geoscience (still in beta phase, contact Asmara Lehrmann)
    - [Polar Impact](#), an inclusive network for racial and ethnic minorities in polar sciences
- Campus visit and interview, formalize this and make it a given practice beyond the Graduate Recruitment Expo (GREx)
  - Give the candidate breaks in their schedule to engage with potential peers/collaborators (Tierney and Bensimon, 1996)
  - Give minoritized candidates time with minoritized students, and student activists so they have an idea of what areas need to improve in the department and on campus (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2017).
  - Minoritized search candidates also take notice who attended their presentations and interviews, the resources available on campus and in the community, and how their research is received
- There are SO MANY resources that UA offer that are just difficult to find. Try to uncover what may be of interest to the applicant.

### Long term: retention

- After the candidate accepts the position
  - Include a resources packet to help them transition to their move to Tuscaloosa, especially help direct them in ways to find community off-campus.
  - Offer a negotiation template to help candidate know what can be negotiated for
  - Organized socialization such as a cohort gathering prior to the start of the semester, or even during the application process, will help candidate build community. Try to think of events that *do not* include alcohol.
- Have a method to keep track of who is doing service. Perhaps having an online dashboard to make the department's service visible and realize the burden that minoritized faculty and students are carrying.



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- Direct junior faculty to skill and professional development opportunities
- Make sure that faculty have a clear guide to promotion/tenure. Studies at Virginia Tech show that minoritized faculty members desired clearer expectations.
- Formal mentorship of new hires can help minoritized new hires from feeling isolated.

### Long term: structural

- Admissions/hiring committees of faculty members would benefit from things such as implicit bias training to avoid/be aware of the issues described in the readings, perhaps make it mandatory for people on those committees
  - “Highlights the importance of encouraging faculty mindfulness about their own role in shaping student success”
- Revisit admissions routines
  - Develop a list of the steps in admissions that involve subjective judgements may aid in checking for implicit biases
  - How to evaluate the files of individual students:
    - Open, holistic review- can lack transparency to the student, can allow preferences to enter the process
    - Structured approach: rubrics and evaluation tools to define selection criteria (NSF ADVANCE)- use of rubrics increases equity and efficiency, but raise the stakes associated with the criteria, so need to be carefully considered
- Updated Protocol that does not rely on the whisper network for new hires. When hiring, have the new hire sign a document that gives the university permission to go to their previous institution and look for any Title 9 complaints.
- DEI office having a diversity dean who sits on those committees and fills that role so the demand is not on the few minority faculty members
- Have the hiring and/or admissions process evaluated by outside consultants
- University level- presidential advocacy and leadership for increasing diversity and retention in faculty is one of the most important factors (Tierney and Sallee, 2010). We need more support from President Bell